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RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN 5603
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RUEHP/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE 3542
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN 4703
RUEHDG/AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO 2822
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C O N F I D E N T I A L NASSAU 000630

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STATE FOR WHA/CCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/16/2017
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [PREL](#) [CU](#) [BF](#)
SUBJECT: BAHAMAS REVIEW FOR TITLE III SUSPENSION OF
LIBERTAD ACT

REF: STATE 65523

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. D. Brent Hardt for reasons 1.4(b)
) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Post recommends waiver of the provisions of Title III of the Libertad Act for The Bahamas. The Bahamas has had a cordial relationship with Cuba, has supported Cuba in international fora, and has engaged in both cultural and economic exchanges with Cuba, including promotion of Cuban trade. The Bahamian government in place prior to May 2 elections justified its relationship as a pragmatic policy needed to address bilateral migration issues, provide support to Bahamian travelers, and address issues of common concern with a nation on their maritime border. The Bahamian government claimed to advocate human rights and democracy concerns to Cuba privately, and did so publicly though indirectly at the Non-Aligned Movement meeting in Havana in September. The new Bahamian government under Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham has indicated that it might downgrade relations with Cuba from a full Embassy to a Consulate, and is likely to take a more skeptical line toward Cuba than the previous PLP government. The extremely close bilateral cooperation between The Bahamas and the U.S. in drug interdiction, alien interdiction, anti-terrorism and border security merits a waiver of the provisions of the Libertad Act. END SUMMARY.

Bahamas-Cuba Diplomatic Relations

¶2. (C) The Governments of The Bahamas and Cuba have maintained cordial relations. However, there have been no known high-level diplomatic visits between Cuba and The Bahamas in the past six months. The Bahamas justifies the need for its relations by citing the need to provide consular services, to address bilateral migration issues, and to promote trade and travel. The Bahamian government has also noted the need for close relations to avoid the kind of event that occurred in 1980 when Cuba sank a Bahamian Defense Force vessel, killing several Bahamian sailors. Like the U.S., the Bahamian government works with Cuba to combat drug trafficking. Cuban authorities recently shot and killed two Bahamian drug traffickers who had entered Cuban waters. The Government of Cuba maintains an embassy in Nassau.

¶3. (C) Illegal migration to The Bahamas from Haiti and Cuba is one of the country's biggest political issues. Illegal

Cuban migrants interdicted in Bahamian waters are detained in Nassau, and the repatriation process is lengthy and expensive. There are sometimes international issues surrounding the presence of Cuban migrants in The Bahamas, and the GCOB sees a pragmatic need to maintain a relationship with Cuba to manage repatriation and any concomitant international complications.

Business and Cultural Exchanges

¶ 14. (C) Direct Bahamian investment in Cuba is minimal given The Bahamas' exchange controls, limited scope for international investment among Bahamian businesses, and the country's economic dependence on the United States. Third country investment in Cuba via Bahamian financial institutions is likely, but unknown. According to the GCOB, The Bahamas imported \$1.6 million in Cuban goods in 2005, with few to no exports. There are currently no bilateral trade agreements in force.

¶ 15. (C) There is a Havantur office in Nassau and Cuban de Aviacion offers direct flights to Havana from Nassau. According to the GCOB, approximately 20,000 Bahamians visit Cuba each year. There are approximately 150 Bahamian students studying in Cuba on scholarship, and the Bahamas uses at least 14 Cuban teachers in the Bahamian school system as part of an educational exchange. Other Cuban teachers also work closely with the GCOB, particularly in the area of special education. Approximately 600 Bahamians received Cuban-paid health care in Cuba last year. An unknown number of Cuban doctors work in The Bahamas to provide thousands of Bahamians with health care. Last year Cuban doctors provided approximately 1,750 eye exams to Bahamians in The Bahamas.

Bahamian Support for Human Rights

¶ 16. (C) The Bahamas has worked to promote the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba, though more could be done. At the NAM summit in Havana in September 2006, The Bahamian Foreign Minister made a strong statement in support of democracy and the importance of people choosing their own representatives. This statement, in the context of a meeting led by Cuba in Havana, supports Bahamian government claims that it privately raises human rights concerns in its meetings with Cuban government officials. However, The Bahamas has in the past typically voted as a block with CARICOM and the NAM in international fora and has opposed the U.S. embargo of Cuba. A new Bahamian Government took power following May 2 elections, promising to downgrade Bahamian relations with Cuba and support human rights in international fora.

Recommendation for Waiver

¶ 17. (C) In light of the extremely close on-going bilateral cooperation between the U.S. and The Bahamas in drug interdiction, alien interdiction, anti-terrorism, and border security matters, and in light of the new government's more skeptical approach to relations with cuba, Post believes The Bahamas should continue to be granted a waiver from implementation of Title III of the Libertad Act.
HARDT